

ON THE ROAD TO WELLNESS

North Dakota Disability Health Project

Promoting the health
and wellness of people
with disabilities

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Accessible Gardening

Gardening provides physical and emotional activities, as well as therapeutic benefits and feelings of accomplishment. Thanks to adaptive tools nearly anyone, including people who have physical limitations and disabilities, can enjoy the benefits of gardening. Garden plots can be designed to challenge strength and coordination, range of motion, eye-hand coordination, and endurance. Besides these benefits, gardening invites socialization.

Planning an Accessible Garden

- ♦ When planning a new garden spot be sure to include places to sit that provide shelter from the sun.
- ♦ Maximize perennial plantings; planting annuals takes more time.
- ♦ Make sure that water is available, using a drip irrigation or soaker hose. Mulch also reduces the watering needs in the garden.
- ♦ Garden paths should have a hard surface, providing a smooth level surface for traction. The path should be at least 3 feet wide to allow for wheelchair access, allowing a 5 foot wide path for turning the wheelchair.



Accessible Garden Containers

- ♦ Boxes and pots are ways to grow vegetables and flowers that are more accessible than plants in the ground. Peas, beans, cucumbers, and lettuce grow well in a box that is 1 by 4 feet by 8 inches deep. Other plants such as beets, carrots, corn, onion and zucchini grow better in a 2 by 3 foot by 8 inch deep box.
- ♦ To find the proper container size for herbs and flowers, find out if the plant is deep or shallow rooted before planting. The more shallow a container, the faster the soil will dry out.



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- ♦ Raised beds are large bottomless boxes that allow for drainage. The height can vary from 18 to 24 inches for someone seated in a chair, to 30 inches or higher for a standing gardener who has difficulty bending because of arthritis or chronic pain. The center of each raised bed should be easily reached; 2 feet for anyone using a wheelchair or 2.5 feet when standing.



- ♦ Hanging baskets can allow for planting space when none exists. Baskets can be hung high or low to allow for limited mobility.
- ♦ Table planters are shallow trays supported on legs. Allow 27 inches underneath for seated knee clearance with the container at least 8-10 inches deep, for an overall structure height of 35 to 37 inches.

Adaptive Gardening Tools

- ♦ There are many adaptive gardening tools to assist individuals. One such tool is a 'cut and hold' pruner that can be used for pruning hard to reach areas.
- ♦ For individuals who are unable to get down to ground level, there are tools with handles that keep the wrist in a neutral, stress-free position, and tools that snap-on, twist or clip-on that give extra length to use from a sitting position.
- ♦ Many adaptive garden tools can be found at www.disabled-world.com or at your local garden center.



Contact the NDSU Extension Service office in your area for assistance in planning an accessible garden.

Sources:

- University of Minnesota Extension Service. *Considerations for creating an accessible garden.*: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/>
- Gardening for People with a Disability. <http://www.disabled-world.com>

Additional Resources:

- Listing of North Dakota County Extension Offices: <http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/ctyweb.htm>
- Adil, J. (1994). Accessible gardening for people with disabilities. *The Enabling Garden.* Bethesda, Maryland: Woodbine House.

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Vision :

All people in ND have access to information and services they need to maintain good health and wellness. There are no health disparities between people with and without disabilities that are based solely on the presence of a disability.

Pay It Forward.....

Pass this information on to others who may find it helpful.

The ND Disability Health Project can provide technical assistance to assist with health promotion, staff training and education, and disability awareness. Contact us at 800.233.1737 or visit our website at www.ndcpd.org/health



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